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ABSTRACT

This keynote talk addresses future trends in educational administration and reviews the ways in which attention to professional development for school administrators can help people to become better prepared for the challenges of today and tomorrow. Future trends include (1) a growing awareness of the importance of instructional leadership; (2) greater focus on the roots, rather than the symptoms, of behavioral disorders; (3) continuing concerns about financial support; (4) pressure to include more women and minorities in educational administration; and (5) participative school management. In the following discussion of professional development, the term "Planned Learning Experience" is first defined as any activity that provides a practicing administrator with knowledge or skills, or that changes attitudes, and is deliberately planned and presented as a learning event. The general range of learning experiences is described. Basic purposes and assumptions that have been the foundation of most current approaches to planned learning for school administrators are then discussed, along with evidence for the effectiveness of various models and approaches. (TE)

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STATUS OF PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

by

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INTRODUCTION

During the last few months, those of us in the United States have been treated to that quadrennial spectacle known as a presidential election. The suspense is over, and now we know that we have to look forward to "Son of Reagan" for four years--at least. As most of us are painfully aware, few specific issues were discussed by either Bush or Dukakis during the campaign. One of the things that we did learn, however, is that both candidates wanted to go down in history as "The Education President." That's nice, isn't it? Note how neither seemed to be striving to sound like the "Educated President" during many of their speeches in the last few weeks. What I really wonder, however, is just what all of this might mean for the business of leadership in schools--what might the statements of commitment mean to those of us who are practitioners of school administration, or preparers of school administrators?

What might the next few years look like for school administrators, now that Mr. Bush has won the right to be our "Education President?" More importantly, what are we--the people who must continue to live in the real world of the practice of educational administration--and out of the hype and glare of political rhetoric--what are we going to do to address the needs for school leadership in the years to come, when we are no longer a stylish campaign issue? These, I believe, are the things I wish to consider with you here.

Specifically, I want to think out loud and reflect a bit on what the life of the administrator will probably be like in the future. Let me follow up those reflections with what I believe is the main

thrust of my remarks--a review of the ways in which attention to professional development for school administrators can help people to be better prepared for the challenges of today and tomorrow. I will speak in terms of the theme for this conference this afternoon--"Planned Learning Experiences for School Leaders." First, I will talk a little about what I think is meant by the term, "Planned Learning Experiences." Next, I will consider with you a description of the general range of learning experiences that are currently being used. Next, I'll go into a bit more detail concerning the basic purposes and assumptions that have been the foundation of most current approaches to planned learning for school administrators. Finally, I'll share with you some of the evidence that is available regarding the effectiveness of the various models and approaches that are out there.

FUTURE TRENDS

I don't pretend to be a futurist in any way. In fact, I tend to be one of those people who is quite skeptical when hearing predictions from others. But I do think that there are some fairly clear signals being given that will point toward the trends that will be followed by school leaders in the years to come:

1. The current emphases on the role of the principal, and indeed, all educational administrators, as instructional leaders will not simply "go away." While we will no doubt continue to see cases of "Good Old Boys" and "Ex-Jocks" with no more leadership skills than a loud mouth being called forward to ascend to leadership roles, there is an increasing awareness that principals and other administrators must engage in behaviors and demonstrate skills that are related to student learning.
2. There will be a continuing effort to ensure that administrative personnel will serve as true advocates on behalf of the needs of children. The concept of "At Risk" students may be

criticized--after all, what kids aren't at risk today?--but it is one that won't go away, and points again to the need for administrators to do more than manage buildings and student behavior. Today, we see far too many cases where there is a preoccupation with corporal punishment or its alternatives instead of a serious and thoughtful dialogue dealing with the roots of behavioral problems. That, in my opinion, will change.

3. I don't know much about the details of educational finance and funding in the provinces of Canada, but I do know enough about school finance in general in the states to be able to make a rational assumption that it's probably a continuing problem for you as well. Concerns about adequate financial support for schools will continue to be an administrative headache. What this really means is that, while instructional leadership will persist. So will daily managerial concerns.
4. The press to open the ranks of educational administration to under-represented groups--and now here I'm speaking of women and minorities--will continue to be a major issue. No more will it be acceptable to think of school administration as a nearly totally white, male-dominated field.
5. Administration and leadership in schools will become increasingly a shared function and responsibility for administrators who are working with their staffs. Empowerment is no longer simply a buzz word--it must be looked upon as a reality of schools and the life of the school administrator.

You could probably suggest that there are many more than these five issues to consider as major future trends. I probably wouldn't argue with you if that's what you said. It wouldn't bother me too much if you were to add a few items, or even yank a few ideas from my list. What I do feel strongly about, however, is the fact that at the root of all these and perhaps many other trends, there are some ingredients that are directly related to our work today.

The fundamental issues facing school administration in the years to come must be understood according to who shall be the people who are able to become administrators in the first place. We need to consider what shall happen to those same people as they take their first jobs, and also what those people shall learn as they continue in their jobs in the future. The common thread running through all of our discussions of problems and challenges for educational administration needs to be understood in terms of professional development for school leaders.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Let me indicate that, when I use the term "Professional Development," I mean for it to be understood as more than a handy synonym for other terms such as "staff development" or "inservice education." "Professional development," as I see it, consists of three distinct phases of a person's career. The first of these is preservice preparation, a phase that includes not only traditional training programs that are required of individuals who aspire to educational administrative roles, and prior to their taking their first jobs, but also related concerns of the selection and recruitment of individuals to go into a professional field in the first place. One of the greatest problems noted by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration was the fact that initial attraction to administrative careers is, to say the least, a haphazard arrangement that doesn't allow for the identification of thebest and the brightest to go into our field. At Ohio State University, as is true of most other institutions with which I am familiar, most, if not all, of our students--and we have many--are self-selects into administrative training. This will not surprise you when I tell you that many of those students that we see are not even close to being the best and the brightest--the most creative and talented folks around. In fact, I have some classes when I seriously wonder if we haven't unconsciously recruited many people from the opposite extreme.

The second phase in professional development is induction, or the initial entry to a career and professional role. Traditionally, this phase of "coming on board" in school administration has been handled in one of two ways. The first approach is the "Sink or Swim" or "Learn by the Seat of the Pants" method where the new administrator learns how to survive, not necessarily how to thrive and lead. In this model, induction becomes a sort of rite of passage more than an integral part of serious professional development for administrators.

The other strategy used historically as a way to bring new administrators on board has been to install newcomers as in-house apprentices, normally referred to as assistant principals, early in their careers. In this way, they have been able to learn the ropes from more experienced colleagues. This generally-overlooked approach to administrative induction has traditionally not received the recognition that it deserves as a potentially powerful entry year device.

Both the "Fly by the Seat of the Pants" and assistant principal routes to administrative induction have something in common in my mind. That is that neither is really what I would label as a "planned" learning experience in the way I might want to use the term. For those who happen to fall into their first jobs without any particular support, experiences are usually not planned and I doubt that much learning ever really takes place. In the case of assistant principalships--opportunities that are not even available to the majority of people going into elementary administration, I once again doubt that much planned learning occurs. It is only within the first few years--and in only a very few cases across the United States--that there has been a concerted effort to build comprehensive and truly planned, learning experiences for beginning school administrators. I am proud to say that a good deal of my time these days has been invested in the development of entry year programs for the State of Ohio, one of only a handful of states where entry year programs have been mandated. I suspect that many other states will soon move in the same direction of requiring some sort of induction program for beginning administrators. I hope that is true.

Finally, we come to the third phase of my model of professional development, ongoing inservice education for administrators. This conference is an example of a part of the life of administrators that is so terribly important to be sure. We continue to face many of the constraints on the delivery of effective inservice opportunities for school principals. I guess we still face the major drawback identified by Roland Barth, namely that "selling" inservice for administrators often flies squarely in the face of the value of using public educational funds unwisely, that is, paying for learning activities for those who have little direct contact with school children. Regardless of such persisting restraints, I am increasingly impressed by the fact that we are seeing more and much better opportunities for educational leaders to engage in activities that will assist those already "in the trenches" to cope with the future issues that I outlined earlier, namely:

-Expectations for instructional leadership

-Dealing with "At Risk" student populations

-Problems with adequate financial support

-The need to open the doors of school administration to under-represented groups

-Promoting the empoverment of teachers

I think that we are getting better at the business of providing ADMINfor administrator inservice. We are becoming more focused in our efforts because our goals are getting clearer. We're also becoming more serious about the business of providing for and addressing our professional growth and development needs. No longer is an activity listed as a "Professional Conference for School Administrators" simply a charming little euphemism for a mid-winter vacation to one of those famous warm southern cities like Orlando, Miami, or Windsor, Ontario. To be sure, people in our business "deserve a break" now and then as much as managers and other workers in all fields by having meetings in the same nice places enjoyed by physicians, private business managers, or real estate agents. But I think that there is much more substance to our meetings today than there was

just a few short years ago when golf score cards were often the only paperwork done at professional conferences.

The really great promise that I see today in the area of administrator inservice comes form the development of so mant really creative and exciting ways for providing learning opportunities--ways that are embodied in the various models that will be explained to you in the small group sessions that follow my talk. We have gone a long way beyond our traditional view that inservice for administrators consists only of reading books, visiting other schools, or attending the occasional conference, but purely as passive listeners.

PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

As I said in my opening comments, one of the things that I'd like to take a stab at doing for you is to define "Planned Learning Experiences." In my mind. I think that is a fairly self-evident concept. Administrators have the opportunity to learn in many different ways. Most take advantage of these learning opportunities. Some people, as we know, sadly do nothing to increase their knowledge base or skill levels once on the job. Frustratingly, many of our colleagues in this category enjoy long and lustrous careers--as survivors. Not true leaders. Pardon the digression. Back to my main point--people can learn "on the job" or "by the seat of the pants" as I pointed out before. In fact there is every reason tobelieve that such learning is quite powerful. But it is not a planned learning experience in the same way that Peer Assisted Leadership, an extremely useful program that will be explained to you later today, is, or in the same vein that what you are dong here in Toronoto for these two days is planned. Quite simply, a planned learning experience is any activity that provides the practicing administrator with greater insights, understanding, knowledge, or skills, or which changes attitudes, and which is deliberately prepared and presented as a learning event. We are fortunate at present because there are many very good planned learning experiences

available to practitioners who are interested in engaging in ongoing professional development.

PRESENT AVAILABLE MODELS

In some work that I did a few years ago with James LaPlant at the University of Cincinnati, we identified at least six generic models of administrator inservice that are available to practitioners. Each of these models had certain strengths and weaknesses as planned learning experiences. Let me say at the outset that all of these models are potentially so powerful as learning techniques that I would assume that all should be readily available to practitoners as forms of professional growth and development.

The first model was the traditional model of the university course offered to practicing administrators. The strength in this model is found in the fact that it offers some possible rigor and quality to learning because it is provided from a research institution. The weakness in the model is that it is derived and based upon the self interests of the university. In other words, university faculties, not practitioners, make up the rules to be followed and the material to be learned. The condition that is most important about this approach to administrator inservice--its saving grace, as it were--is the fact that it is an economical way to introduce complex information to a group.

Our second model was referred to as the short-term institute--an example of which is the activity in which you are currently participating. Many other similar sorts of short-term activities are available throughout the course of a year. A major strength in this approach, I think, is that it can be responsive to immediate needs of practitioners. The shortcoming of the institute model is often the fact that it simply does not emphasize much in the way of follow-through. Participants can attend institutes and "be entertained"--not necessarily do anything that is offered.

Related to the institute is the inservice academy, usually

sponsored by an agency such as a local school system, a state department of education, or even a university. It is similar to the credit-driven university course in format, delivery, strengths, and weaknesses.

A fourth model is the competency-based assessment model. The strength that it enjoys is its focus. Its greatest drawback is the fact that it may reduce the many complex bits of knowledge and skills that are needed to function as an effective administrator to a listing of fairly simplistic recipes that need to be acquired by practitioners.

The fifth model is the network. Our studies of administrators' perceptions of valuable learning activities shows that this is the most popular approach of all. What is important to watch is that there be some structure. Networking can degenerate into simply being Friday afternoon "bitch sessions" at a local watering hole. If that happens, there really isn't much left of a valuable planned learning experience.

Finally, there is the model of the collegial support group. Perhaps the most obvious example of this approach is the /I/D/E/A/ Principals' Inservice Program that is in place in more than 300 school systems in the United States and Canada. Again, it is well-received by practtioners who appreciate its responsiveness to practioners' concerns and needs--similar to the values seen in networking. Unlike networking, however, it offers considerably greater emphasis on structure and accountability as participating principals are expected to work toward school improvement goals.

We have several examples of these models available here at this conference, plus a few other approaches that I don't really see fitting in one or another generic model. I note that you can hear about networking, for example. I also note that people will describe the use of mentoring as a way to guide the sequential and orderly progression of people into administration as a career. I think that is quite interesting and important as well.

Two models that we did not include in our original work are also

represented with demonstrations here in Toronto. One is an approach of which I am particularly supportive, and that is the structured, peer observation, coaching, and peer-tutoring model of Peer Assisted Leadership, or PAL. The model was originally developed at the Far West Laboratory in San Francisco. Bruce Barnett, one of the originators of the program will be speaking to some of you in small groups later. I really believe that you will find much of interest in his presentation. The other emerging model is the concept of mentoring as a form of the delivery of administrator professional development. We have had some very positive results derived from our reliance on mentoring of preservice administrator candidates in a specialized training program that was sponsored by the Danforth Foundation of St. Louis during the past year. A colleague of mine in Ohio, Marsha Playko, and I have recently been developing a series of training materials and activities to be utilized in applying this concept of administrator mentoring to special induction programs for beginning administrators in school systems. We also see the likelihood that this practice will have great potential application to in-service education for school administrators as well.

CONCLUSION

The importance of these approaches to planned learning experiences, in my mind, is simply that they all represent ways to help practicing school administrators to do their jobs even better. And, the bottom line in all of this is that, when administrators are able to do their jobs better, it ultimately means that things are better in schools, and when that happens, kids learn more.